

Welfare Awareness Topic: Self- Harm

Overview – *Self-Harm is when you hurt yourself, usually as a way to help cope with difficult or distressing thoughts or feelings. This can be by scratching, cutting, overdosing on medication, biting or burning.*

[Mind](#) outline that some people have described self-harm as a way to:

- Express something that is hard to put into words
- Turn invisible thoughts or feelings into something visible
- Change emotional pain into physical pain
- reduce overwhelming emotional feelings or thoughts
- have a sense of being in control
- escape traumatic memories
- have something in life that they can rely on
- punish themselves for their feelings and experiences
- stop feeling numb, disconnected or dissociated
- create a reason to physically care for themselves
- express suicidal feelings and thoughts without taking their own life.

Uncomfortable emotions might grow more intense if a person continues to use self-harm as a coping mechanism, and self-harm can cause feelings of shame, as though it might give temporary relief from the emotional pain that the person is feeling, this relief is only temporary because the underlying reasons still remain.

Learning other ways to cope can make it easier to break the cycle of self-harm and will help in the long term. The first step in getting help is reaching out, whether that is to a trusted friend, adult, or medical professional. If you want professional help to manage and recover from self-harm, talk to your GP, they are trained to deal with these conversations and can support you in the short-term and long-term management of self-harm. Please check out the resources below for more info on how to help or get help.

During intense urges to self-harm, it can be hard to imagine that its possible to do anything else, but please know that there are steps you can take to help you make other choices over time. Mind has links and support for understanding patterns of self-harm, distracting yourself from the urge to self-harm, and delaying self-harm [here](#).

If you self-harm, it is important that you know how to look after your injuries and that you have access to the first aid equipment you need. [LifeSIGNS](#) has information on first aid for self-injury and self-harm.

Article/Source

- Mind have information on how to help yourself [here](#), as well as a PDF that explains self-harm, how to access treatment and support, and guidance for friends and family [here](#).
- There are also online tools and apps, like [distrACT](#), which gives you easy, quick and discreet access to information and advice about self-harm and suicidal thoughts, and [Calm Harm](#), an app designed to help people resist or manage the urge to self-harm.
- [Rethink](#) also have information and guidance on self-harming, where to get help, and the steps involved in getting help, they have a useful contacts sheet with more places to get help [here](#).
- The [National Self-Harm Network](#) is an online forum where you can chat with other people affected by self-harm
- If you are worried that a family member or friend might be hurting themselves, ask them how they are doing and be prepared to listen, even if it makes you uncomfortable. Gently encourage them to get treatment, but don't go on the offensive and make them promise to stop, as this approach can be unhelpful and increase feelings of shame.

Support

If you would like to talk to the safeguarding team about anything you have just read, we will listen without judgement and signpost you to support. If you would like to talk to a member of the Safeguarding Team then please get in touch: safeguarding@bpp.com